

Remarks

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 2-7, 10-16, and 25-33 are pending in the application, with claims 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 27-30 being the independent claims. Claims 30-33 are indicated to be allowed. By the foregoing amendment, claims 2-7, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 25-33 are amended herein and claims 1, 8, and 24 are canceled. Based on the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections, and that they be withdrawn.

Claim Objections

At paragraphs 2-4 of the Office Action, claims 1, 3-8, 10, 12, 13, 15-16, 24, 27-28, and 30 were objected to for various informalities. Claims 3-7, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 27, 28, and 30-33 were amended herein to address the claim objections raised in paragraphs 2-4 of the Office Action. Claims 1, 8 and 24 have been canceled. Accordingly, Applicants request that these objections be withdrawn.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

In paragraph 6, claims 1, 2, and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,014,176 to Nayebe (hereinafter Neyebe). Claims 8, 15, and 25-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Nayebe in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,949,827 to Deluca (hereinafter "Deluca").

Claims 3-7, 10-14, 16, and 27-29 have been indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 27 have been rewritten in independent form in order to further expedite prosecution of this application. Claims 15

and 25 have been amended to depend from respective independent claims 13 and 27. Claims 1, 8, and 24 have been canceled. Accordingly, claims 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16, 27 and their respective dependent claims should now allowable over the cited art. Claims 30-33 have previously been indicated to be allowable. Accordingly, Applicants request that the rejections under §§102 and 103 be removed and that claims 3-7, 10-16, 25-33 be passed to allowance.

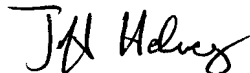
Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is
respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX P.L.L.C.



Jeffrey T. Helvey
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 44,757

Date: 8/13/04

1100 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-3934
(202) 371-2600
JTH/agj
SKGF\DCI\200507.1